"Scientifically, laser has now reached its highest standard"

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On the occasion of the German Society for Laser Dentistry (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Laserzahnheilkunde e.V.) annual conference 2012 in September in Leipzig, Germany, Prof Dr Norbert Gutknecht of the University Hospital of RWTH Aachen, Germany, commented on the current situation of laser dentistry, the key issues of the upcoming DGL annual conference as well as the future of laser therapy in dentistry and the activities of the DGL.



Prof Dr Norbert Gutknecht

_laser: *Prof Dr Gutknecht, this year's DGL annual conference takes place in early September in Leipzig, Germany. Can you tell us what the participants can expect from this event? What are the highlights of the conference?*

You can roughly attribute four key points to our upcoming congress in Leipzig. Firstly, we want to present the latest scientific discoveries to our audience in an easily accessible way. Secondly, we aim at emphasising the significance of laser for a successful dental therapy by pointing out how laser technology has been integrated in various medical and dental therapies. Thirdly, economic efficiency plays a crucial role in any laser application. Therefore, another important aspect of this year's congress is the new German Scale of Fees for Dentists (Gebührenordnung für Zahnärzte, GOZ). And last but not least, there is the social aspect. The success of last year's DGL anniversary party has shown once more how important social values and friendships are nowadays. Our DGL party on Saturday is dedicated to combining the scientific interest we all have in common with a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

_*How would you assess the current situation of laser dentistry? What are the main directions its development is going to take? What do you think will be the status of laser dentistry in five years?*

Scientifically, laser dentistry has now reached its highest and most substantiated standard. Furthermore, laser is an integrative technology highly accepted by the professional organisations in medicine and dentistry. In my opinion, this shows how laser technology can take a decisive influence on the success of various therapies. Speaking of the main directions of the development of laser dentistry, we have to take three essential aspects into account: Firstly, there is the advancement of pico-second and femto-second lasers with regard to hard tissue applications. Secondly, laser-activated photodynamic therapy has become both more specialised and developed. Thirdly, therapy concepts for already existing laser systems are constantly being developed, which will lead to a significant growth in the sector of laser technology within the coming five years. This perspective is especially relevant for periodontology, endodontology, cariology, surgery, implantology and pedodontics.

_*DGL maintains a high profile, both nationally and internationally. Can you name current activities initiated or supported by the DGL?*



Nationally, the DGL boards are intensively engaged in establishing statements and clinical treatment guidelines for the German Society for Dental and Oral Medicne (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zahn-, Mund- und Kieferheilkunde, DGZMK). Furthermore, subgroups of the executive board and advisory boards are currently discussing the problem of interpreting and billing certain laser treatment options according to the new GOZ. Internationally, DGL is represented both in European and international laser societies. Moreover, not only are members of the DGL much sought-for speakers, but they also are entrusted with different additional tasks in their respective organisations.

_Photodynamic therapy is going to be among the key topics of this year's DGL conference. What is the current status of photodynamic therapy in laser dentistry and how relevant is it for the daily dental practice?

In the past, photodynamic therapy only played a secondary role or the role of the outsider, both in scientific research and in clinical applications. However, we have noticed a grown interest in this therapeutic branch since 2006, which has even more increased within the past two years. By now we can rely on different wavelengths and photosensitisers which have been scientifically tested and applied in clinical therapies. Nevertheless, the range of possible dental applications of lasers is still very limited, with the highest clinical relevance in periodontology: photodynamic therapy has proven a successful integrative method for the standardised procedures of periodontological treatment.

Prof Dr Gutknecht, thank you very much for this interview!

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